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Universal Periodic Review

Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review*

Sierra Leone

Addendum

Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review

* The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

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Introduction

1. Sierra Leone has considered 208 recommendations received during the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on the 27th January 2016.

2. Sierra Leone has prepared a concise response to the recommendations received. We note that while the desired consultation among stakeholders was not as extensive as planned due to financial and time constraints, a number of civil society institutions and key Ministries, Departments and Agencies including the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Human Rights Commission have been fully involved.

3. Sierra Leone is pleased to note that the context of implementation of the second cycle recommendations will take place in post-Ebola period and would likely run into a change of leadership and the introduction of a new constitutional environment. Despite the perceived financial uncertainty, political transition and constitutional change, Sierra Leone has considered and willing to support the majority of recommendations. The responses given here are thematically grouped. In many cases, we have confirmed our acceptance of the recommendations by stating where they enjoy the support of Sierra Leone, and noted a few for further consideration.

A. Improve implementation of international instruments

4. Recommendations **1–38 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone**. We intend to continue to cooperate with all the Human Rights Council mechanisms and will take steps during the implementation period to improve the signing and ratification of major international instruments.

B. Constitutional and legislative framework

5. Recommendations **39–47, 49–51, 55–58 and 62–63 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone; while recommendation 48 is noted**. Sierra Leone is actively pursuing the review of its constitution to bring it in line with international human rights standards and to meet the general democratic aspirations of its people.

6. We will however continue to maintain a ban on the initiation of under-18 girls while engaging our public on the future of cultural practices such as female genital mutilation.

C. Institutional and human rights infrastructure and policy measures

7. Recommendations **52–54 and 59–60 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone**. We shall continue to strengthen the regime of human rights promotion and protection as part of its democratic future.

D. Cooperation with treaty bodies

8. Recommendation **61 enjoys the support** of Sierra Leone. We continue to reaffirm our commitment to the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms especially Treaty Bodies. We will ensure that obligations under those treaties we have signed will be met and those recommendations, which we have accepted, that concern ratification of treaties will be addressed.

E. Equality and non-discrimination

9. Recommendations **65–72, 77–79 and 86-90 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone; whilst recommendations 64, 73–76 and 80–85 are noted.** Sierra Leone will ensure that discrimination of any class of its citizens is prohibited. Knowing that a review of the constitution is ongoing and changes most likely in those areas noted, we remain confident in the process and we know a more robust protection for all disadvantaged groups will emerge.

10. Those recommendations that have been noted in this category will be addressed in due time. For lack of resources and priorities according to our social demands and capabilities we can only address those that enjoy our support. We continue to encourage the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone to work with communities to improve awareness of such issues noted.

F. Right to life, liberty and security of the person

11. Recommendations **91–105, 110, 114, 122 and 127–135 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone; whilst recommendations 106–109, 111–113, 115–121 and 123–125 are noted.** We continue to reaffirm our commitment to improve human rights. However, we will continue to consult local stakeholders on a clear and definitive policy regarding harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation.

G. Administration of justice, including impunity and the rule of law

12. Recommendations **136–152 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone**. We continue to promote a robust reform agenda for our justice system as part of our constitutional and democratic development.

H. Right to privacy, marriage and family life

13. Recommendations **153–156 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone**.

I. Right to religion and freedom of expression

14. Recommendations **157–165 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone**.

15. Sierra Leone continues to enjoy a high prevalence of religious tolerance. We continue to extend an open invitation to the Special Rapporteur and other Mandate Holders for country visits. We have legislation towards the protection of Freedom of Expression; we know that there have been calls for its proper implementation and repeal. We are often constrained with proper enforcement due to lack of resources, however, all guarantees afforded by law remain non-derogatory.

J. Women's empowerment and political participation

16. Recommendations **166–167 and 169 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone; while recommendations 126 and 168 are noted.** We continue to view the empowerment of women and increased participation as inviolable to the democratic and socio-economic development of our country.

K. Right to social security and to an adequate standard living

17. Recommendations **170–176 and 207 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone**. The recommendations under this thematic group capture the political desire of the Government of Sierra Leone. The Agenda for Prosperity continues to be the motivation for socio-economic improvement.

L. Right to health

18. Recommendations **177–189 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone**. We have fought a tough battle with an epidemic that ravaged not only the lives of its people but also the foundations of its economy. Whilst we are rebuilding, we are aware that other states might have best practice models to share, for which we welcome every support we can get in molding the health sector into a one that will afford proper care for all.

19. Teenage pregnancy continues to be prevalent. Whilst we are using all methods to curb it we also ask for assistance form those who have tried and conquered it to partner with us so that we can create a model suitable for our people from the own lesson learnt.

M. Right to education

20. Recommendations **190–204 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone**. We are convinced that building a strong economy and a democratic and politically stable society require capable and educated citizens. We will continue to expand the boundaries of education as part of our democratic development and post-Ebola future.

N. Improve implementation of the Universal Periodic Review recommendations

21. Recommendations **205–206 and 208 enjoy the support of Sierra Leone**. We firmly believe that complying with this mechanism allows an assessment of our human rights regime. Therefore, we will work closely with all sectors of society and civil society to ensure the full implementation of all supported recommendations, while laying the foundation for a smooth implementation of recommendations noted.